

LIBERAL MEMBERS FAILED TO PROVE A SINGLE CHARGE

Government opened up public accounts for the thirteen years of Conservative administration, yet three months' searching inquiry failed to unearth a single transaction reflecting on a Minister of the Crown.

"Judge not that ye be not judged" is a text which applies with peculiar force to politicians who demonstrated that they had no evidence to substantiate their accusations of corruption.

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PUBLIC ACCOUNTS WERE REPORTED ALL IN ORDER

No man is more unreliable than he who makes positive assertions about matters concerning which he has no knowledge.

No man is more despicable than he who for personal advantage deliberately makes false statements reflecting on the reputation of another.

When on the public platform the leaders of a political party assert that their opponents have been guilty of wrong-doing in specific instances, the electors have a right to assume that the accusers have information justifying such charges.

LIBERALS MADE MANY CHARGES.

The Liberals of British Columbia have for several years been appealing to the voters to turn out a Conservative administration, **which they declared** was the most corrupt government in Canada, backing up the assertions with charges of "graft" relating to specific transactions.

In February, 1916, by-elections opened the way for the election to seats in the legislature of the leader of the Liberal party, H. C. Brewster, and the most ambitious candidate for his position, M. A. Macdonald. With the two Socialist members they promptly set to work investigating the numerous charges they had made. **The government, only too glad to have the truth made known,** introduced a resolution giving the opposition the unique privilege of inquiry into the public accounts of every year since the people first elected a Conservative government to administer the affairs of the Province.

DID NOT MAKE GOOD ONE CHARGE.

For three months Messrs. Macdonald and Brewster, assisted by the Socialist members, and prompted by other leading Liberals, such as John Oliver, Stuart Henderson, H. C. Hall and J. W. de B. Farris, strove with might and main to find some tittle of evidence to justify their many extravagant accusations. Many charges were investigated, one before a special committee, and the others before the public accounts committee. **The transactions to be probed were selected by the Liberals**, who doubtless chose the ones in which they thought they had the greatest probability of success in finding something crooked.

That they failed their own silence on certain familiar topics is the best evidence.

That they did not attempt to present a case for the government to answer in a single one of the matters under investigation is what most people are likely to overlook. In every instance they relied upon fishing around to find out something. They called the individuals whom they had put under suspicion and asked them to admit wrong-doing. **They did not present a scrap of affirmative evidence** to show what it was that had justified themselves, the other Liberal speakers and the Liberal editors in stating that the transactions under investigation were tainted.

LIBERALS EXPOSED OWN CHARACTERS.

What is the moral quality of men capable of such conduct?

What credence will intelligent citizens give to further accusations by these same individuals? Do not these facts bring the Liberal leaders within the two classes already referred to—men who talk wildly about facts they have no knowledge of, and men who deliberately rob others of their reputations.

REFLECTED CREDIT ON GOVERNMENT.

Absence of a strong opposition has often been regarded as a weakness to any government, and a temptation to be slack. The government of British Columbia, which for seven years has had such unanimous endorsement from the public that until 1916 there were never more than two members in opposition, passed through a tremendous real estate boom in that time, and at the end of it three months of continuous investigation proved that opportunities

such as temptation seldom puts in men's way had failed to shake its members' integrity.

The very transactions investigated were shown to be ones highly to the advantage of the Province, reflecting great credit not only on the business astuteness, but on the honour of the government.

KITSILANO PURCHASE COST PROVINCE NOT ONE DOLLAR

**In Only Case Where Liberals Dared to Make a Charge on
Floor of House They Had Not a Jot of
Evidence to Offer.**

In only one instance did the Liberals put their hat in the ring by laying a charge on the floor of the legislature. In that case M. A. Macdonald moved for a special committee to investigate his charge that the public accounts had been falsified to make it appear that the legislature had voted the \$300,000 which, he claimed, had been spent without authority on the ineffective purchase of the Kitsilano Reserve. He charged that no title had been acquired, and while he did not presume to do so in the house, he had repeatedly insinuated from the platform that a portion of the purchase money went into the Attorney-General's own pocket.

PUBLIC ACQUIRED VALUABLE LAND.

The evidence showed, however, that eighty acres of valuable waterfront land in the heart of Vancouver was acquired for public purposes from the Kitsilano Indians at an outlay of \$300,000 on the part of the Province. H. O. Alexander, a Vancouver barrister, who by reason of the fact that he was the first white child born where Vancouver now is, had intimate relations with the Indians, was selected by Mr. Bowser to carry on negotiations looking towards the accomplishment of the purchase of the reserve land. There had been a public agitation in favour of the deal, led by H. H. Stevens, M.P., and others, for years, and the public is well acquainted with the reasons for seeking to remove the Indians

from the proximity of a large city and for making practical use of so valuable a piece of waterfront property.

The government decided that it would pay \$300,000 and no more for the reserve, on the condition that each head of an Indian family received at least \$10,000, that the Indians were satisfied, and that the bones of the dead were removed.

OTTAWA ASSENTED TO DEAL.

After two years negotiations, during which several other parties also endeavoured to purchase the reserve to sell it to the government, Mr. Alexander obtained an option and the government paid over the \$300,000, the amount payable to the Indians having been increased to \$11,250 each. The facts were communicated to the Indian department at Ottawa and the Federal government assented.

NO DELIBERATE FALSIFICATION.

Much used to be made by M. A. Macdonald of the alleged falsification of the public accounts until the facts were made clear in evidence. That proper authority for the expenditure of the money was legally given was proved by Mr. Bowser, who produced the special warrant signed by Lieutenant-Governor Paterson, a shrewd business man familiar with Indian affairs. He signed this warrant after Mr. Bowser had explained the transaction to him, and as there was no vote of the legislature, he did not need to authorize the expenditure unless he was satisfied that it was in the public interest.

There was, however, undeniably a clerical error in the public accounts, due largely to a change in the incumbency of the Auditor-Generalship on April 1, 1913, a week or two after the special warrant was issued. Mr. W. Allison took office under a new Audit Act, which made certain changes in the system of entering public accounts necessary. As the warrant was put through under the old act and Mr. Allison did not assume office until the new act came into effect, it was only natural that a clerical error in making this entry under the old act should have been overlooked by a new Auditor-General serving under a different statute.

BOWSER ANNOUNCED FACTS IN 1913.

The absurdity of a suggestion that there was a deliberate falsification to make it appear that the money was voted by the legis-

lature is apparent from the fact that Mr. Bowser publicly announced through the press in 1913 that the money had been granted by special warrant of the governor.

PROVINCE MAKES MONEY ON DEAL.

As to the question of title, Attorney-General Bowser's old-time contention that once the Indians were removed the property reverted to the Province **has been conceded right by the Federal government.** The land so shrewdly acquired is to be used for harbour purposes and the Dominion has agreed to pay for it at a price to be determined upon arbitration, but to be on no account less than the \$300,000. Thus the **Province is assured of its money back,** and for doing the valuable public service of restoring this land to useful purposes, is practically certain to make a substantial profit for the treasury.

WITHDREW CHARGE OF DISHONOUR.

As to the suggestion that a portion of Mr. Alexander's commission was returned to the Attorney-General, **Mr. Macdonald,** when confronted with Mr. Alexander, **publicly stated that he regarded his fellow barrister as an honourable man,** and accepted fully his accounting of the disposition of the money, which showed that **not a cent went to Mr. Bowser,** his firm or anybody connected with his political party. This calm withdrawal of a charge made many, many times on the public platform was one of the striking features of the investigation. It showed to what depths this ambitious young Liberal had stooped when he could go on the platform and **denounce as a party to a crooked transaction a man whom he admitted he knew to be incapable of such conduct.**

MR. BOWSER TURNED READ DOWN.

Hamilton Read was shown by the evidence of three or four witnesses to have **had no part in the government's purchase** of the reserve. Read had been making efforts on his own account to obtain an option, and in the course of his negotiations feared that Alexander, with his greater influence over the Indians, might block him. He interviewed Alexander and the latter assured him he would not block anybody else's efforts. Read, thinking to make

the bargain safe, told Alexander he would give him half of what he made on the deal and Alexander, **too honourable to see things in this light**, returned the compliment by promising to divide with Read if he succeeded.

Read never had a chance of success, because the Indians did not trust him nor his assistant Joseph Cole, a half-breed, while **Mr. Bowser refused flatly to transact public business through a man who had recently been a clerk in his own law firm.**

AUTHOR ADMITTED RUMOR FALSE.

It was Joseph Cole, in pique because Read refused to give him any money, who circulated the rumor that some of the commission went back to Mr. Bowser. He stated in evidence before the committee that his reason for believing this to be so was the statement made to him by C. A. Calkins, another man who made efforts to buy the reserve for a terminal railway company, offering two million dollars to the Indians. **Calkins admitted to the committee that his suggestion to Cole was not truthful**, and made it quite plain that his object at the time was to stir up trouble with a view to blocking the government's purchase. Read also opened up his entire bank account for over a year and permitted the committee to see where every dollar of his money had gone.

Some criticism was made that the commission earned by Mr. Alexander was too large. It should be remembered that the government made a flat offer for the reserve of \$300,000, and that Alexander was the one man who could have bought it at anything like such a price. It took him two years to do it, but that **he saved the Province hundreds of thousands of dollars** is evidenced by the fact that the Indians turned down a railway company's offer of two million dollars in favour of his offer of one-sixth that amount.

OVER FORTY YEARS' EFFORTS BROUGHT TO SUCCESSFUL END

Similar insinuations to those made about the Kitsilano purchase had been commonly made by Liberals concerning the government's purchase of the Songhees reservation for terminal and industrial purposes at Victoria. Occupying an even more import-

ant position from the standpoint of industrial development than the Vancouver reserve, the Songhees property was sought by the citizens of Victoria for 45 years. **The property was valued at \$2,500,000.** Over 20 resolutions urging government action were passed at different times by the legislature, and strenuous efforts were made by **the Hon. William Templeman and other Liberal representatives** in the Laurier administration to persuade the Indians to move. **They all failed.**

Then Sir Richard McBride made a contract with J. S. H. Matson that if he would persuade the Indians to move the government would pay him a five per cent. commission on the value of the reserve. Mr. Matson, through H. D. Helmcken, the Indians' best friend, **disbursed money among them and entertained them until he had won their confidence.** Finally they consented to sell and Mr. Matson was given his commission as agreed.

INDIANS WELL SATISFIED.

The government supplied the tribe with a much more fertile block of land for their new reserve and gave each Indian \$10,000 for his interest in the reserve and a sum representing the value of the house which he vacated. The Indians told the investigating committee which heard the above facts that they were well satisfied with their new home. H. D. Helmcken, who assisted Mr. Matson in influencing the Indians, was also given a fee for his services, and the Liberals contended that Mr. Matson was entitled to nothing as Helmcken had done the work. It was pointed out, however, that **Mr. Helmcken had endeavoured to assist every other effort to remove the Indians without success,** so that he was not the deciding factor.

The charge that portions of the commission found their way back to members of the government was **absolutely disproved** by the production by Mr. Matson and Chief Cooper of the Indians of records of the expenditure of their money.

DARED NOT LAY A CHARGE.

An attempt to follow the money through third and fourth parties was resisted by the witnesses, but the chairman of the committee ruled that if Mr. Brewster would lay **a specific charge,** he could go as far as he pleased in an effort to prove it. In a court where he was called upon to prove his statement, however,

Mr. Brewster would not take such a risk, thus indicating how much belief he had had in his campaign accusations. If he had had knowledge of wrong-doing he would have been only too glad to lay a charge which would result in production of the evidence to prove it.

A MEAN INSINUATION.

The straits to which the Liberals were reduced in their efforts to find some fact about which they could make petty insinuations is indicated by the fact that Mr. Brewster asked if Sir Richard McBride supplied the Indians with liquor at a tea-party he gave them at his home. Needless to say, the Indians stated that this was not true.

ARCHITECT TESTIFIED VALUE RECEIVED FOR EVERY DOLLAR

On the platform the Liberal party had charged that "graft" worse than any that had ever taken place in Canada featured the erection of the magnificent addition to the parliament buildings at Victoria. The public accounts committee made an exhaustive inquiry into this matter, taking up in detail the circumstances relating to every sub-contract.

It was shown that the new wing of equal floor space with the older portion of the building had been **built of modern fire-proof materials and with much more elaborate ornamentation** in the portion devoted to the library than anything in the old structure. The cost of the new building was \$1,100,000 as opposed to \$800,00 for the old wing built 25 years ago, when labour and materials were fully 35 per cent. cheaper. **Surprise was occasioned** that the much more elaborate new wing with its fire-proof materials and gorgeous ornamentation in the library, could have been **built at such a low figure.**

AMERICAN FIRM TURNED DOWN.

Seven tenders for the general contract were received. The lowest was \$939,000, but as this was from an American firm the government decided to ask the next lowest firm, McDonald & Wilson (Canadians), to **reduce their tender.** They did so by \$20,000,

and were given the contract at \$950,000. The other tenders were all much higher.

SINISTER MOTIVE EXPOSED.

General contractor W. S. McDonald, who through his solicitor, **M. A. Macdonald**, had been unsuccessfully pressing the government to meet a claim for extras, was plainly antagonistic to the government. Indeed the motive for the inquiry was made quite plain when the Liberal member's relation to his client was shown, as Mr. Macdonald was planning an action against the government to recover the general contractor's claim for extras. The investigation he conducted before the public accounts committee was simply **a cheap way of trying to get evidence.**

The sub-contract to Fraser and Webber for excavating was the great bone of contention at the investigation. It was claimed that this work should have been let to a lower tenderer in Mr. Macdonald's constituency. The written records showed, however, that Mr. McDonald sent a letter to the minister of public works **stating that Fraser and Webber were the lowest tenderers**, while the evidence went on to demonstrate that their tender was **so obviously low that they nearly went "broke."** The general contractors finally voluntarily paid them the full amount allowed for the job, which was 25 cents a yard more than the contract called for. Even at this price they made so little profit that they **refused to accept a contract for the boiler-house excavation at the same price.**

ASSURED DEPARTMENT TENDERS WERE LOWEST.

Similarly it was shown that the general contractor notified the department of every sub-contract he let, stating in his letters to the minister **in every case that the lowest tenderer was given the work.** The absurdity of suggesting that others than the lowest tenderers received contracts is manifest from the fact that it was McDonald & Wilson who paid them, **not the government.** McDonald & Wilson's price was fixed by the original contract, and any money paid to sub-contractors necessarily would have been money out of their own pockets.

The evidence of F. M. Rattenbury, the supervising architect, was to the effect that the government received a splendid piece of work at a remarkably low figure, that dollar for dollar was given in the value of the work done, and that there was never a suggestion of patronage or favouritism made to him from any direction.

IF GOVERNMENT ERRED, FIVE SURVEYORS SWORE FALSELY

Alleged alienation of timber land is an old accusation by the Liberals. Before the public accounts committee it was sought by the Liberals to show that valuable timber lands in the Renfrew district (Vancouver Island) had been sold as second class agricultural land at \$2.50 and \$5 an acre. **The valuation of a company about to float a bond issue on the strength of this supposed asset was relied on by the Liberals.** The said valuation, however, which described the land as having 60,000 feet of timber to the acre (a fabulous amount, as lumbermen know) is **the subject of an action for fraud** by the parties who were induced to purchase the bonds in question.

HAD SWORN VALUATIONS.

On the other hand the sale by the department as second class agricultural land was based on **the sworn valuations of no fewer than five qualified land surveyors**, among them being the late Captain Herrick McGregor. The Liberals, by their contention, sought to show that every one of these five valutors perjured himself on the same point at different times.

SACRIFICED A SECOND FEE RATHER THAN RUIN COMPANY

It was charged that as a favour to Mackenzie & Mann the Attorney-General had illegally permitted a mortgage of the Canada Western Lumber Company to be registered at several thousand dollars less than the fee which the schedule required. In the first place, it was shown that the company is in the hands of English bond-holders, so that the **Mackenzie & Mann insinuation disappears at once.** In the second place, it was shown that under similar circumstances the same privilege had been extended to two other parties, the Associated Cement Company and the Salvation Army.

FEE HAD BEEN PAID ONCE.

The event was simply this: A mortgage of £3,000,000 was issued on the property in 1910, and **the proper fee of \$7,507 was paid** in each registry, Victoria and New Westminster. The company was in difficulties and a re-organization was attempted shortly afterwards. This re-organization necessitated a re-registration of the same mortgage, the security and the parties being exactly the same. Payment of the large fee again would have ruined the industry at that particular time and the Attorney-General, upon application being made, **exercised his discretion** under the act and allowed registration to be made for \$200. **The Salvation Army was also allowed to re-register its securities** in the names of new trustees when General Booth died without paying the full fee a second time, and the same principle was involved in the case of the Associated Cement Works.

TRAMPLED BRITISH COLUMBIA'S FAIR NAME IN DUST AND MIRE

Other small matters were investigated, with similar results. The above recitation of the course of the Liberal representatives, who produce no scrap of evidence to show on what they based their oft repeated assertion that British Columbia had the most corrupt government in Canada, indicates clearly **how little sense of responsibility** rests within their breasts.

In throwing open the public accounts for thirteen years to the scrutiny of the opposition, the government of this Province compares by no means unfavourably with the Liberal government of Alberta, which, this very year, used its majority in the house to vote down several resolutions for investigating committees on matters regarding which the opposition did not hesitate to make specific charges. How much more worthy of esteem is the British Columbia government, then, than the Liberal government of Saskatchewan, which has already had several scandals exposed.

It is an old saying that men judge others by their own standards, and the electors of British Columbia will be quite able to decide whether the baseless charges made by the Liberals were

not the product of **minds incapable of disassociating power and graft.** When they recall how the Liberal campaign at the Vancouver by-election in February was conducted, the voters will have little difficulty in deciding which political party is going to give the Province the honest administration of affairs to which it is entitled.

